

May 11, 2015

The Honorable Thomas P. Griesa
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Judge Griesa:

I would like to start this letter by first and foremost offering my sincere and most heartfelt apologies to those people who have been affected by my conduct. The pain and suffering caused to so many people by the choices I have made is something I will have to carry with me for the rest of my life.

Ever since my arrest and subsequent incarceration I have had a lot of time to reflect upon what brought me to this point in my life. It is my hope that by reading my letter you will see me for who I am and not just the man who made some very poor choices at a difficult time. I also hope to provide you with some context whilst making it clear that I am not making excuses justifying my actions because I alone bare that responsibility.

I have worked my entire adult life spanning over twenty years and built a career helping to support some of the most socially disadvantaged citizens in our society, and until recent events I have never before come into contact with the criminal justice system.

I moved to Australia in 2007 and eventually settled in Brisbane after securing a job in a new government initiative providing specialist behavioral support to adults with intellectual disabilities and severe challenging behavior. The last position I held was on the commissioning team responsible for developing and eventually running a service called the Forensic Disability Service which was one of the first of its kind in Australia.

I found out about the website Silk Road from a news story broadcast on the radio back in September 2012 and it piqued my interest. Soon after I became an active member on the Silk Road discussion forums and several months later I was made a forum moderator.

At this time I was experiencing what was undoubtedly the most challenging period in my professional working career. I was not coping well with the associated stresses of the seemingly unending demands and pressure placed upon me, and my health started to deteriorate as a direct consequence. I was frequently experiencing bouts of insomnia that further reduced my ability to contend with the rigors of my job. To make matters worse I would often find myself called upon in the middle of the night to respond to emergency situations at work.

The Internet chat forums of Silk Road became an escape for me, and I found myself spending ever-increasing periods online in cyberspace where my real life stressors seemed left behind, albeit temporarily. As a moderator on a chat forum, I enjoyed some status within the online community, and this filled a void in my life, a void that should have been filled by other pursuits such as my relationships and real world job.

I also started to self-medicate with various illicit substances, namely cocaine and MDMA as yet further maladaptive coping strategies. My consumption of alcohol also increased, becoming my established routine for relaxation every night, and I would drink pretty much every night after I got home from work.

Something that I am deeply ashamed of now is that I tried to hide most of this from my partner for fear of her reaction. She could see that I was struggling with my work, but I didn't want her to see me as someone who wasn't in control or coping with what life was throwing at me. I was under immense pressure to perform and deliver results, and I deluded myself by pretending that when things improved in time I would just get back to normal. My boss and I would often refer to "the light at the end of the tunnel" as we were both feeling the unrelenting pressure of work, which was taking a heavy toll on both of us. We both used to say how good it would be to see the light start to get brighter, but for me it didn't and in fact it got significantly dimmer as time went by.

My situation really started to deteriorate when my line manager, the Centre Director with whom I had worked very closely, suddenly left the service following a change in the political landscape. He was replaced by someone who I found to be very problematic, and my work life became a misery to the extent that I would often find myself feeling physically sick as I approached the final part of my journey into work. My cocaine use spiraled out of control as I sank ever deeper into addiction, and what was once infrequent recreational use became ever more frequent.

My partner expressed her concern for me on many occasions, and she tried her best to persuade me to seek professional help, something now that I wish that I had done. I did finally go and see my doctor in late 2013, but by that time it was too late and the damage had been done with my arrest coming just a few short weeks later.

Prior to my arrest in December 2013, I had never before come into contact with the criminal justice system. My world collapsed around me on that fateful day, the day I was supposed to be flying home to the UK for my first family Christmas with my elderly parents in seven years. My plans to propose to my partner were shattered and my lifelong career as I knew it ceased to exist. My arrest brought great upset and shame upon not only myself, but those close to me including my work colleagues and employer.

Being extradited also brought with it the additional pain and suffering of being removed from my community and my partner. The heartache this has caused not only me but my loving partner is almost too much to bare however I accept this as the consequence of my actions and I make no excuses for the poor choices that I made.

No matter what my beliefs about drug policy I can see with absolute clarity now that I was justifying my own drug use by normalizing it and deluding myself. I then took that deluded perception with me onto the forums seeking the company of what I perceived to be other like-minded individuals whose attitudes and beliefs were seemingly aligned to my own.

As cliché as it may sound, hindsight is a wonderful thing and sitting here now as I write this letter reflecting back with a clear and sober mind I can see just how messed up my life and priorities had become. I have caused so much harm and suffering to so many people through my selfish actions it is going to take me the rest of my life to try and repair the damage.

I have already started down this path by using the time spent incarcerated as proactively as possible. When you are in jail, time becomes something that is done to you with a lot of unstructured time on your hands making it easy to waste your days away. I have however chosen to take a very different path and have thrown myself into as many meaningful and purposeful activities with a focus on positive lifestyle enhancement as possible. I have become a GED tutor, assisting my fellow inmates attain their high school equivalency test; I have undertaken a drug education program and several other programs including GOGI (Getting Out by Going In); Non Residential Drug Treatment Programme; The Focus Forward Project and African-American drama. Prior to my extradition whilst in prison in Australia, I also held several positions of responsibility including Bail Clerk and Unit Buddy. Both positions gave me the opportunity to help my fellow inmates with issues associated with their incarceration.

One of the hardest things I have had to do is get real with myself about what got me into this mess in the first place and what is going to keep me out of trouble again in the future. All I know is that I will never be coming back to prison no matter what. Nothing in this life is worth losing your liberty over and enduring such a horrendous ordeal. My only focus moving forward will be getting my life back on track and rebuilding my life with my partner Claire. I know now what needs to happen to make that a reality, and nothing will deter me from that goal.

When I am released and returned home, I hope to be able to use my experience incarcerated to give me a unique perspective of what it is like to live within an institution. I have worked my entire career in institutions of one sort or another, and there cannot be that many behavioral specialists who can truly appreciate what it feels like to have your world controlled and dictated to you by others.

I am incredibly grateful for the love and support of so many good friends and family whose letters of support you have received. I can only hope that the specific circumstances of my case incline the court to grant me leniency and allow me the chance to return home at the earliest opportunity so I can start the long process of rebuilding my life.

Respectfully yours,



Peter Nash